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ABSTRACT

The character of internalization as a continuous phenomenon was explored, with particular attention given to children's movement from heteronomy to autonomy. (The term "internalization" refers to the process by which an individual acquires an attitude, belief, or behavioral regulation from external sources and progressively transforms it into a personal value, goal, or organization.) When 121 children between 5 and 13 years of age were asked to give reasons for doing chores, their responses were found to be classifiable according to three motivational categories: extrinsic, transitional, and internalized reasons. The more that children felt it was important to do chores (or follow parental rules), the more likely they were to give internalized reasons for performing them and the less likely they were to give extrinsic reasons. To study children's internalization of achievement-related behaviors and goals, a sample of 245 elementary school students in third through sixth grades were asked to give reasons for such behaviors as "doing homework." A range of individual differences was found, and a lawful pattern of correlations emerged between various levels of internalization. Results further indicated that higher levels of internalization were associated with lower anxiety and a positive style of coping with setbacks or failures. Findings suggested that excessive external pressure on children by parents and other "socializers" may have an unintended deleterious effect upon internalization. (RH)

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Internalization and Motivation:

Some Preliminary Research and Theoretical Speculations

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The term internalization which is the focus of this paper is neither a product of original theorizing or recent research. Internalization is a common term which has enjoyed currency in psychology for over fifty years. It refers to the process by which an individual acquires an attitude, belief, or behavioral regulation from external sources and progressively transforms it into a personal value, goal or organization. English and English (1958) defined it as:

> incorporating something within the mind or body; adopting as one's own ideas, practices, standards or values of another person or society (p. 272).

Similarly, in Hartmann and Loewenstein's (1962) classic definition internalization is:

> The process through which organisms transform regulation by external events into regulation by internal events.

Both of these definitions, choroused by numerous others (e.g., Loewald, 1962; Schafer, 1968; Collins, 1977, Meissner, 1981) highlight the active aspects of this process. These definitions assume that intermalization begins originally with external regulation or standards, but that in time these are "taken in," transformed, identified with, or made personalby the subject. In stressing an active relationship between the person and the regulations presented by the environment, internalization represents a pole in an ongoing dialectic between the person and the social milieu, a dialectic in which the emergent sense of self and autonomous functioning is the synthetic product.

A related concept, which in cognitive-behavioral circles has become popular, is the term self-control. There is indeed a sense in which self-control represents internalization. Thus, when a person exibits self-control it is assumed that some internal function does the regulating rather than something or someone external to the person. But self-control, at least in current usage (e.g. Bandura, 1977;) lacks the continuum quality associated with theories of internalization.

Self-control is an undifferentiated term which could mean anything from a rigidly introjected regulation wherein some superordinate function within the personality dominates all others, marked by tension, conflict and suppression of awareness, all the

way to a smooth, spontaneous self-regulation, where behavior control is the outcome of a person's interests and values, integrated into an organized and conflict-free hierarchy. It is the very importance of the gradations between such types of self-control which makes the term internalization and the conceptual continuum which underlies it, preferable to "self-control".

It has been the gradient of internalization, i.e. its character as a continuous rather than categorical phenomenon which has been the focus of recent interest in the Motivation Research Program at Rochester, members of whom are co-authors of this presentation. In particular, we have been concerned with the aspect of internalization which describes the movement from heteronomy or control by external forces to autonomy or self-determination in the regulation of action. The degree to which a given form of regulation is perceived as having an external locus of causality or internal locus (that is, brought about by one's self) has been one of the organizing metaphors for research. The change from external to internal locus of causality for certain regulations appears to us to be both a developmental process, and a matter of individual differences. Currently we are exploring both aspects.

It's clear that there are many kinds of motivated action which require no internalization. For example, intrinsically motivated actions occur spontaneously, and do not require the initial presence of outside controls or incentives. Thus, we do not need to "train" or teach children to engage in or "value" exploration. They value it naturally (White, 1959; Deci & Ryan, in press). Indeed, caretakers frequently feel the need to "train" children where not to explore, either for reasons of physical safety or cultural taboo. The problem of setting such limits is more pertinant to the issue of internalization, because we want children to "take on" the limits, safety concerns and taboos as their own. But internalization concerns more than just what not to do. It is also involved in the myriad behaviors and values we want children to perform or identify with,

but which they do not do easily or "naturally". Thus, while children love to explore, get dirty, and manipulate all shapes and forms of objects, they seem to display little spontaneous interest in washing their face, keeping their rooms clean, taking responsibility for chores or acting polite at the dinner table, to cite just a few examples. Initially, at least, it behooves the child's caretakers to "externally" promote such actions, and this is often accomplished through the provision of consequences, such as tangible or social rewards or the potential to avoid negative outcomes or punishment. In other words, the process of internalization begins as the circumstance of extrinsic motivation: the behavior or regulation is accomplished by the child in order to get something (or avoid something) from powerful or important others.

This then defines the domain of internalization: all those regulations whose occurrence originally depends upon extrinsic incentives. The origins of internalization lie in the contingencies set in the social world, over behaviors which must be induced with available controls and incentives if they are to emerge.

Extrinsic controls are usually tangible for the very young child, e.g. avoidance of punishment or administration of rewards such as food or physical contact. With time the focus of interest for the child is increasingly social. What matters, therefore what motivates self-regulation, is increasingly social rewards and contingencies. Such factors as praise, disapproval, and esteem of others become progressively more potent regulators which promote certain otherwise non-spontaneous behaviors. Thus far the regulations are primitive internalizations; they are maintained (unstably) through external supports. But they are internalizations by virtue of the fact that one anticipates the consequences of action, and self-regulates with respect to what is anticipated. What has been internalized is the external regulatory forces (or one's fantasy of them) in their original form.

To consider further developments along the internalization continuum we use the concepts of internally-controlling and internally-information events (Deci & Ryan, in press), along with the developmental processes of introjection and integration through

which these styles of regulation are established.

We, like Schafer (1968), use the term introjection to refer to the process whereby a regulation is internalized in essentially its original form; that is, the person simply establishes an internal representation of the external regulatory function or agent, and then acts in accord with the demands of that now internalized agent. One can then apply approval and disapproval to oneself in a manner that is identical to what was formerly external. Thus, for example, a boy hears his mother tell him not to throw the ball in the house, "Good boys don't throw balls in the house." Through introjection, he establishes an internal version of his mother's command and regulates his ball throwing by complying with that internal command. The regulation is internally-controlling and involves the person's generating feelings of self-disparagement, negative self-evaluations, or alternatively self-aggrandizement or approval contingent upon certain thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. Internally controlling states are introjects in the full sense described in psychoanalytic theory (Schafer, 1968). As Ryan (1982) has demonstrated, there can be considerable pressure and conflict experienced in such regulation, since one part of the person is in charge of the rest (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1952). That is, there are conflicting impulses (to do or not to do, to refrain or not to refrain) which in the real sense of the term are not integrated, thus requiring superordinate support of cognitive-affective consequences in order for regulation to occur.

Internally-controlling regulation is much more stable than extrinsic regulation for it does not require the presence of the external contingencies. The contingencies and "rules" have become wholly internal. The regulation is frequently very persistent and can be quite inflexible and unyielding. Although it is different from extrinsic regulation in that it does not require external contingencies, it does share many characteristics with extrinsic regulation, most notably the conflictful controller-controlled relationship (now intrapersonal) and all that that entails. Whereas with extrinsic regulation, the controller and the controlled are separate people, with internally-controlling regulation both are within the same skin. In both cases there is the tension inherent in being controlled.

Regulation by internally-controlling events, dispite being "internal," is not self-determined, for it lacks the unity of action that characterizes self-determination. The final point on the internalization continuum, regulation by internally-informational events, is necessary for internalized regulation to be self-determined.

Internally-informational regulation is achieved through integration of the internalized controls. It thus involves a transformation of an existing structure rather than just an addition of a non-integrated one. Integration leads to a more stable form of internalization; it is the process by which less stable and more conflictful internally-controlling events are transformed into internally-informational ones, thereby completing the internalization process. The controller-controllee relationship is superceded by an elaboration of the conflict-free structure that we refer to as self and that is necessary for self-determination.

As a self-regulation becomes more integrated, the support of cognitive and affective consequences such as self-aggrandizement and self-disparagement become increas ngly less essential. The person experiences less pressure and greater flexibility, the two being inversely related. We do not mean to imply that integrated internalizations involve a total absence of conflict; there may be some conflict between different aspects of oneself. But the existence of the regulation itself is conflict-free and whatever conflict may exist betwen that regulation and some other need or regulation is acknowledged or accepted, and real choices are made flexibly in light of the alternatives available. That is, flexibility and felt pressure (controllingness) are inversely related. Insofar as such internally informational regulation occurs there is an experience of self-determination and choice. The regulation is one's own and effected for one's own reasons. However infrequently this form of regulation is operative in our culture, it appears to be the hallmark of adjustment and integration and is the organismic outcome of internalization that is not impeded. It represents the true meaning of socialization; it is not simply that one behaves according to the social standards, but rather that one behaves, feels, and

thinks in a way that is congruent with social values because one has accepted them as one's own.

Thus, to summarize, our theory of internalization suggests that in addition to direct external regulation, there are at least three distinct styles of self-regulation which can be operationally distinguished for behaviors that can be internalized. First behavior is extrinsically motivated. As it becomes internalized the formerly extrinsic controls become introjected and internally-controlling events support this structure. Under optimal conditions internally-controlling styles become increasingly integrated into the self-structure eventuating in fully internalized, self-determined action. Developmentally, introjects may, but do not necessarily, become integrated. As we will later speculate, this is hypothesized to depend in part on the environmental conditions within which internalization occurs.

Using this model we have begun exploring the development across childhood of self-regulation for those behaviors which initially required extrinsic motivation for their occurrence. Chandler (Note 1) provided the initial empirical pursuit of this problem. She identified a variety of such behaviors, which she labeled "chores," after extensive pilot interviews with parents and children. Her list of behaviors included items like "picking up ones room," "going to bed on time," "doing homework" and others. These were behaviors that were initially disliked by children and were in need of extrinsic, parentally provided supports for their occurrence. She asked children (n=121) between the ages of five and thirteen to describe the reasons <u>why</u> they did these target behaviors, and their responses were recorded verbatim. A pretested coding system with high reliability was then used to classify their responses, resulting in 11 specific types of responses for "chores," reducible to three super-categories (Table 1). <u>Extrinsic reasons</u> included responses indicating that the behavior in question could only be elicited by extrinsic cues, e.g. a reward or punishment contingency. In addition to tangible rewards, this category also included social contingencies, such that doing an activity in order to maintain peer or adult approval was classed as

extrinsic. Transitional reasons were defined as those responses by children which manifest a verbalization of general social rules or maxims which children knew should be followed, without specifying either the person enforcing the rule or what consequences would ensue for following or not following the maxim. Finally, internalized reasons represented those responses wherein the reasons for self-regulation were (1) the achievement of a self-determined goal, (2) avoidance of a self-determined consequence and (3) altruism. This latter response (altrusim) had a frequency of only 2%, the lowest of all the specific categories. In sum, these three global categories of children's reasons for behaving were constructed to represent a dimension with three points--done for external reasons, done for internalized but unintegrated rules, and done for more integrated, self-determined reasons. They thus represent a continuum of less to more "internalized". Chandler hypothesized a positive correlation between age and children's report of more internalized reasons for performing these activities which she described as a change in "motivational orientation". Her results supported those predictions. Children's use of "transitional" and "internalized" response increased with age, while emphasis on social controls and consequences decreased.

This suggests the presence of a developmental process leading to an internalized orientation toward performing behaviors such as chores. One can assume that when children first begin learning how to do chores, they dislike them and can be motivated to perform them only by extrinsic factors administered by parents. With development, children come to incorporate the parental values and standards such that they become internalized values which the children eventually embrace as their own. The data gathered by Chandler suggest that, when children are able to understand and accept that the consequences of performing behaviors such as chores can be beneficial to their own goals, internalization can be said to have occurred, and the children can be self-motivated to engage in chore behaviors. The more self-determined, self-motivated qualities of the responses comprised by the internalized super-category help to support the suggestion that such self-determined motivation is the end point of a developmental progression

which begins with the use of extrinsic responses, and, proceeds through a period of "transition." Further research, possibly longitudinal rather than cross-sectional, and spanning both younger and older children than Chandler's sample, would aid in adding detail and support to this process. But Chandler's data are among the first to demonstrate the developmental process of extrinsic regulation being transformed into more internalized regulation.

There was an important attitude which corresponded to the change in motivational orientation across these ages. Older children rated these extrinsic or "chore" behaviors as more important than younger children, and the attitude of importance was significantly related to children's use of internalized and transition responses. The more important children felt it was to do chores (or follow parental rules) the more likely they were to give internalized reasons for performing them, and the less likely they were to give extrinsic reasons. These dual findings suggest that children's understanding of and attributions about the importance of chores is linked to the proposed developmental process of internalization taking place in that domain.

We believe that the concept of a need for self-determination and competence gives intelligibility to this trend. It helps predict and explain this direction of develoment away from simple responsiveness to integrated values; away from heteronomy and towards autonomy with respect to those behaviors not originally intrinsically motivated.

Evidence which supports our construct of a developmental trend within the domain of extrinsic behaviors toward increasing self-determination has also been obtained by Loevinger (1976a; 1976b) in her research on ego development. Through the use of various psychometric instruments, particularly her Sentence Completion Test (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970), she has traced the stages of ego development, noting a progression from depending entirely on the environment for regulation toward autonomous, integrated regulation through the use of what she called mature conscience. This type of regulation, which is free of guilt and self-condemnation represents the archetype of self-determined

responding. And although her research indicates that few people function in that way a significant amount of the time, the developmental trend is clearly toward integrated self-regulation.

In order to investigate the overlap between her constructs and our own we (Weil and Ryan, Note 2) recently compared subjects' responses on Loevinger's sentence completion measure of ego development with the Causality Orientations Scale (Deci & Ryan, Note 3). The latter scale is a measure of motivational orientation in the organization and regulation of action. Briefly there are three orientation levels tapped by the scale 1) internal, in which there is manifest self-determination for behavior; 2) external where external contingencies provide the impetus and framewo k for organizing behavior; and 3) impersonal, in which there is a perception of non-contingency or passivity with respect to opportunities for action and a felt absence of opportunity for personal causation (deCharms, 1968). In a sample of college students significant correlations were obtained for the two measures (see Table 2). More internal (self-determined) motivational styles were positively associated with ego develoment (referred to as I-Level), while more external or a motivational styles were negatively related to I-Level. This sample is small, and the developmental range is restricted such that these findings are merely suggestive. Yet they heuristically underscore the concept that the manner through which self-regulation is motivated reflects aspects of internalization.

Following the lead of Chandler's findings with children, Tero, Connell, and Ryan (Note 4) recently presented data collected on children's internalization of achievement related behaviors and goals. An instrument was developed based upon a more elaborate sequence of "reasons" for behaving than previously tried by Chandler, but similarly arranged along a continuum from extrinsic to self-determined. The behaviors in question included academic domain items such as "doing homework," following through with assignments, and participating in class discussions. At the lowest levels of internalization, e.g. one does ones homework "so the teacher won't yell at me," or

somewhat later "so that others will think I'm smart," i.e. to get approval. At still higher levels of internalization, one responds to avoid internal criticism, since the values and demands have been "taken in." At this level a child might endorse an item like "I'd be ashamed of myself if I didn't do my homework." It's clear in such a statement that such a child is applying formerly external contingencies to himself or herself. Ryan (1982) and Deci and Ryan (in press) have called such styles of regulation "internally-controlling" to capture both their "internal" yet forced and pressured qualities. At the upper levels of this academic internalization scheme were items reflecting self-determined motivations. Thus, children who have integrated achievement and educational concerns and values might do homework "to learn about something" or participate in class 'to find out if they have the right idea' (see Table 3).

These items were administered to 245 children in a suburban elementary school in grades 3-6. Even though the developmental span of this sample was narrow, a range of individual differences was found and a lawful pattern of correlations emerged between the various levels of internalization. Lawful in this model pertains to the fact that any given level of internalization should correlate most highly with those levels which are developmentally expected to be proximate, and that either increasingly ascending or decending levels should correspondingly show progressively less relationship. Table 4 reflects this model.

It is interesting to note that the level of internalization reported by these elementary school children has several important ramifications for their school adjustment. The results suggested a negative correlation between children's self-report of anxiety and the level of internalization. The more self-determined, or integrated the child's reasons for these school behaviors, the less anxious they reported themselves to be. Similarly, the higher the level the more likely they were to evidence a "positive" coping style toward setbacks or failures. Higher levels of internalization were also strongly positively correlated with measures of mastery motivation (Harter, 1981), while lowest or

externalized levels were significantly negatively correlated with this construct. Finally, as might be expected more internalized reasons for achievement behaviors were more likely to be correlated with self-esteem (Table 5). This metric for the internalization of achievement related regulations is currently undergoing further development and testing.

To return for the moment to the theoretical plane we might ask, what is the nature of the processes which promote internalization? Why do organisms appear to have a readiness to 'take in' the adjustments demanded of them and make them more integral to the self? From our own theoretical point of view, more elaborately presented elsewhere (Deci & Ryan, in press) internalization is an aspect of the more general synthetic function of the self to increasingly differentiate and integrate its learnings and adaptations. Differentiation and integration problems are allied with the general, and we believe innate, propensity of persons to be self-determined and competent. It can be said, then, that while the behaviors or regulations which are subject to internalization processes are <u>not</u> themselves natural or intrinsically motivated, it is a natural, intrinsically motivated process to attempt to bring these acquisitions into harmony with the self. Thus, the internalization process is one that is expected to accrue spontaneously and naturally, similar to other intrinsic motivated action unless there is interference or perturbation of this process from without. Stated differently, the motivation to internalize can be "undermined" as can any other intrinsically motivated process. If true, this hypothesis has some far reaching implications for parenting, educational and psychotherapy practices all of which are concerned with the promotion of internalization. It suggests that too much external pressure to behave in a particular manner to value or believe in something may actually have an unintended deleterious effect upon its internalization. We have speculated that excessive controlling communications from parents or other "socializers" may lead to only to low levels of internalization such as an extrinsic orientation or internally-controlling regulation (introjects). However, for internalization to proceed such that the regulations or values become integrated into self, an <u>informational</u>

environment is necessitated. Thus, we suspect that parents with more autonomy orientation toward child rearing are likely to facilitate internalization while both permissive (unstructured) or controlling styles will have children who express lower levels of internalization (see Deci, Schwartz, Scheinman & Ryan, 1981 for a discussion of these orientations). This conjecture is currently being studied in several behavioral domains, but awaits empirical confirmation.

As a final theoretical caveat on this process, we must comment that dispite our claim that under relatively informational circumstances internalization is a natural, spontaneous propensity, we do not suggest in this that any value or behavioral regulation can (or will) be internalized. The authors do not share the somewhat pervasive viewpoint in psychology that the human organisms is 'empty' or infinitely malleble. Cultural inhibitions, values or ideals may or may not be capable of assimilation, and some may be inherently in conflict with organismic tendencies. Thus, no amount of informational or autonomy-oriented feedback will allow persons to fully integrate conveyed values like "boys shouldn't cry," or or "you should not explore" to name two arbitrary examples. That there are some inherent aspects of being human with which socio-cultural demands may conflict, to that extent there will be conflict and resistance in the process of internalizing. It is not a new insight to state that we should expect some tensions in the dialectic between the individual and the forces of socialization. We might even use the internalization continuum as a metric of this conflict, particularly through the critical evaluation of those prescriptions or regulations which rarely or never become fully integrated.

Table 1

Chandler's (Note 1) Coding System for Children's Report of Motivational Orientation Concerning "Chore" Behaviors

Specific Category	Supercategory
1. Rule Following	
2. Gain Peer/Sibling Approval	
3. Avoid Peer/Sibling Disapproval	1. EXTRINSIC
4. Gain Parent Approval	
5. Avoid Parent Disapproval	
6. Gain Tangible Reward	
7. Positive Maxim	
8. Negative Maxim	2. TRANSITION
9. Gain Self-determined Consequences	
10. Avoid Self-determined Consequences	3. INTERNALIZED
11. Altruism	

Table 2

Correlations between the I, E, and M subscales and I-LEVEL on Loevinger's Sentence Completion Test for the Measurement of Ego Development (Weil & Ryan, Note 2)

	I-LEVEL		
	M+F (N = 42)	F (N = 23)	M (N = 19)
I	.43***	.47**	.40*
E	-.22	-.36*	-.04
M	-.32**	-.55**	.01

*$p < .10$
**$p < .05$
***$p < .01$

Table 3

Levels of Internalization in the Academic Domain
(Tero, Connell, & Ryan, Note 4)

Level 1.	To avoid punishment "so the teacher won't yell at me"
Level 2.	Rule Following "I'm supposed to"
Level 3.	Other positive approval "So others will think I'm smart"
Level 4.	To avoid self-derrogation "So I won't be ashamed of myself"
Level 5.	To avoid self-determined negative outcome "I don't like that behavior"
Level 6.	To affirm competence/seek information "To find out an answer"

Table 4

Correlations of Levels of Internalization in Academic Domains

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	Intrinsic
1	1.00						
2	.50	1.00					
3	.23	.26	1.00				
4	.18	.26	.51	1.00			
5	.15	.28	.41	.63	1.00		
6	-.19	.07	.29	.43	.54	1.00	
Intrinsic	-.32	-.12	-.05	.15	.19	.45	1.00

Reliability of level composites (Cronbach's α)

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	Intrinsic
	.37	.73	.71	.70	.65	.66	.78

Table 5

Correlations of Levels of Internalization in Academic Domain with other Self-related Constructs

Self-Related Construct	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Intrinsic
Anxiety	.41	.27	.24	.22	.26		
Noncoping	.29	.24	.34	.39	.42		
Positive Coping		.22	.21		.29	.36	
Projection Coping	.22						-.21
Denial Coping			.32				
Perceived Competence	-.32					.31	
Mastery	-.36	-.20			.20.	.47	.39
Self-esteem	-.18			-.21		.22	
Stanford Achievement Composite	-.21	-.20					
Sex			-.23				
Grade						.20	

*all r's p .05

Mastery - mastery motivation, the child's preference for challenging tasks, independent mastery efforts, and curiosity in school (Harter, 1981).

Perceived Competence - The child's perception of his/her academic competence (Harter, 1982).

Anxiety - The child's anxiety within the school situation (Baummeister,).

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